

LONDON DAILY TELEGRAPH
7 August 1981

Eisenhower 'ordered Congo assassination'

By HUGH DAVIES in New York

PRESIDENT Eisenhower personally ordered the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the pro-Soviet Congolese leader, who vanished in 1961, according to evidence about to be published in the United States.

Lumumba's mysterious disappearance and presumed death has never been satisfactorily explained.

He was last seen stumbling from a plane in Elizabethville, Belgian Congo, now Zaire, with his eyes blindfolded and his hands tied behind his back.

The area, Katanga, now Shaba, was the domain of his arch-enemy, Moise Tshombe, and a United Nations investigation concluded that Tshombe had ordered his murder.

It was presumed that he had been killed by Katangese soldiers and Belgian mercenaries, possibly even with Tshombe's personal participation.

The Central Intelligence Agency stated at the time that it had no hand in his death. But evidence is given in the "Congo Cables," a book written by Madeleine Gelb, suggesting that the murder may have been ordered from the White House.

Details are given of the arrival in the Congo of "Joe from Paris," a code-name for Sidney Gottlieb, the CIA's top scientist at the time.

He came equipped with a kit containing an exotic poison designed to produce a fatal disease indigenous to central Africa.

Poison toothpaste

The scientist told the CIA's station chief in Leopoldville, then capital of the Congo, that the substance was somehow to be slipped into Lumumba's food, or perhaps into his toothpaste.

Asked by the CIA agent who had authorised the assignment, the scientist indicated, the book said, that the order came from "the highest authority" — President Eisenhower.

While Gottlieb eventually dumped the poison in the Congo river because it was becoming "unstable," an alter-

native murder method was suggested by the CIA of shooting Lumumba with "a high-powered, foreign-made rifle with telescopic scope and silencer."

All this was considered in the wake of a meeting of the United States National Security Council, which, according to the book, was later described in closed-door sessions of a Senate select committee.

President Eisenhower presided at the session which was attended by officials of the CIA and the State Department.

Mr Robert Johnson, a member of the council's staff who was also present, was quoted as saying: "At some time during that discussion, President Eisenhower said something—I can no longer remember his words—that came across to me as an order for the assassination of Lumumba."

"There was no discussion. The meeting simply moved on. I remember my sense of that moment quite clearly because the President's statement came as a great shock to me."

In fact, the minutes of the meeting contained no such directive. However, Mr Johnson explained that under the procedures then in effect, an executive order of that nature would either have been omitted from the record or "handled through some kind of euphemism."

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